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EARLY HISTORY OF CENTRAL ALBERTA IS REAL ROMANCE OF SETTLEMENT; HOW TRANSITION WAS EFFECTED.

Land Peopled by Indians and Buffalo, Colonized and Settled with Practically No Disturbance, Is Today Home of Happy Thousands of White People.

Less than fifty years ago the Blackfeet and the Crees set up their skin tepees where today, populous cities and towns stand, in the area which is generally spoken of as "Central and Northern Alberta," stretching, as it does, from the Red Deer river to the northward boundary of the province, and including within its borders, that future inland empire, the great Peace River country.

Where today, waving fields of wheat, and complacently-grazing cattle, mark the home of the prosperous farmer, fifty years ago, the first lords of the plains, the Red Men, hunted the buffalo and the antelope. The elk and the deer trod the silent places where today, thousands of men dig Alberta's famous coal from dark tunnels hundreds of feet below the waving green trees.

Fifty years ago, not a single mile of railway thrust steel fingers across the flower-strewn meadows of central Alberta. The travois of the Indian--the slow, creaking ox-cart--the silently-gliding canoe--the dog-drawn cariole--these were the sole means of traveling through a land which as yet had scarce felt the tread of the invading thousands of white men and women, who, in the days that

were coming, would make their homes and earn their happy livelihoods, on those smiling acres.

OVER THE BUFFALO TRAILS

For roads, the wandering herds of buffalo, and the nomad Indians, the hunted and the hunter, made their own trails, brown streaks that wound devious ways up hill and down dale, across streams, along the marge of blue lakes where the wild-fowl splashed, through the sun-lit days of joyous summer--through the golden glory of fall and the hazy days of the "indian summer"--to winter camps in some sheltered dell, there to wait once more, the northward flight of the wild geese, and the fairy touch of spring along the trails of yesterday.

And far to the northward, out over the Great Lone Land, went the men of the Hudson's Bay company--the trappers and traders, the missionaries and prospectors--outriders of a civilization that was to touch even the far lands with the wonders of railroads and of steam-boats, of radio and of the telegraph.

Then time, with steady march, wiped out the finger-posts of the past. The buffalo vanished from the dusty brown trails. The Indian made treaty with the white man, and sat down on his reservation to a new life that was half civilized--ahlf wild. Westward across the prairie crept the steel fingers of transcontinental railways, driving the deer and the elk back and yet back, to the places where there was still silence and where sun-steeped woods still slept, as yet secluded from the foot of man.

THE SHINING PLOUGH-SHARE

Farm-steads rose against a background of green woods. The shining plough-share bit into the sod grazed. The new granary of a nation shone golden in the glory of its first wheat crops. Fences shut out the encroaching wild growth, and the axe rang among the timber where once the elk and the deer roamed through all the long, golden days of summers that have gone.

On the banks of the Saskatchewan where for so many years the old trading post of Fort Edmonton held watch and ward over the bickerings of Cree and Blackfeet, rose a city--small in those days, but destined yet to be the greatest city of the prairies--Edmonton. North and south ran the magic fingers of steel that was to carry a new civilization into an empire as yet almost unscratched. Northward into the country of the fur trader--southward to the rolling prairies where the rancher, still tenaciously resisting, watched the creeping fences of the homesteader, that should drive him west and ever west, into the last range of the cattleman--the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

West to the huge coal deposits ran the steel--through mountain passes into the fertile valleys of the Pacific slopes. Eastward across the prairies, through farm and wheat lands, past the new oil field at Wainwright--where the last of the buffalo lived a semi-wild life behind wire that fenced the world's largest open park--to the eastern boundary of the province.

THE LITTLE TOWNS GREW UP

Everywhere, along the lines of the railway, little towns and villages rose, each of them tributary to some stretch of farm land that was to support, in the days to come, thousands of happy people from all the crowded centres of the world. Some of these towns, like Lacombe and St. Albert, rose round earlier settlements founded by missionaries of the fur-trading and the early settlement days of the country. Others grew with the steel, rising from the green prairie or the wooded bushland, from little one-storey shacks to pretentious buildings of brick, with tall grain elevators along the tracks to store the golden wheat, and with all the modern conveniences that belong to an older civilization.

And as the people came, the railway followed. From a dozen or more towns along the principal lines of railway, branch lines sprang into being, thrusting the wilderness far behind, and bringing the magic touch of civilization to farm homes once miles and miles from anywhere. Criss-crossing the whole of central and northern Alberta, these branch lines have built up a population of nearly half a million people, all gaining a contented livelihood from the land, or from occupations that must necessarily follow the tilling of the land.

INDUSTRY FOLLOWS THE FARMER

First there must be the tiller of the soil. Then must come the industries to support the farmer's activities. Coal must be dug to ward off the color of winter; flour must be

ground from the golden wheat; meat must be packed, clothing must be made. Then follow the necessities of civilization--public utilities, sewer, water, electric light, gas--the little luxuries--amusements, sports, holiday opportunity--and so the cities and the towns have grown, both town and country inter-dependent each upon the other--each doing its part in the upbuilding of a nation where but fifty years earlier, only the red man and the buffalo wandered.

Social and economic amenities, too, must have their place. There must be roads--and today there are thousands of miles of good roads; main highways for rapid auto travel from town to town, and from province to province, where each summer, thousands of tourists enjoy the unrivalled air, and sunshine that are Alberta's best possession.

SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

There must be schools--little one-roomed schools for the country children--bigger, many-roomed schools for the city dwellers. And central and northern Alberta has a school system second to none in the world, with education free to all from primary grade to high school, and with unrivalled university facilities, at a cost far below that of university training in the older lands.

There must be churches where the people may meet and give thanks to God for all these good things that Alberta offers them. And everywhere, no little hamlet is so remote, that it has not its church organization.

Municipal organizations must be built up, to attend to the various community requirements of a civilized country, and collect such taxes as are required for their maintenance. Every district in central and northern Alberta has its organizations--be it city, municipality, town, village or hamlet, while purely rural affairs are managed by the rural municipalities and municipal district organizations.

There must be easy communication by telephone or telegraph. In this, the entire area is linked up by the most modern systems of rapid communication, which in turn, enable residents to reach the world's centres almost in a moment. Radio, too, is playing its increasi gly great part, and today, few farmers have not a radio set that enables them to hear nightly all the day's news of the world.

COMMERCIAL REQUIREMENTS

There must be banks, commercial and trading houses--all the vast and complicated machinery of modern business, and these also, central and northern Alberta possesses, equally with the older countries. The banker, the merchant, the trader, the dealer in implements, the professional man--all these have a large place in the activities of this new country, and it is only in the most remote of districts, that settlers must still travel any distance to secure these various services.

So, briefly, has grown up this great country of central and northern Alberta, in half-a-century of development such as perhaps no other country can boast. It has proven its

possibilities to all the world, but still it beckons to the people of the old world--still it cries to the seeker after opportunity, to the pioneer, to the man who loves the sunshine and the sweep of smiling landscapes--"Come over and live here! Here is the land of greater opportunity--the land of wider, cleaner living--the land of prosperity and of plenty--the last new empire that still remains for man to enter into."

ITS EARLY HISTORY

And what is the earlier history of this wonderland?

Is it the history of murder and rapine--of bloodshed and slaughter--as the encroaching whites drove back the first owners of the land, the red men? Is it the history of lawlessness, of shooting and of knifings--of the law of the strong against the weak--such as many new countries have known?

No, that it certainly is not, Rather, it is the romance of the early explorer--the romance of the fur trader and the "coureur de bois"--the romance of the early pioneer who drove his creaking ox-cart across the prairies from Winnipeg--the romance of the new settlers such as the Barr Colonists near Lloydminster--the romance of the coming of new people into a new world--of Hebrideans, blue-eyed and sea-tanned, from their "misty shielings" and their sea-gull haunted island homes; of people from central Europe, sturdy peasant stock who take to the good land of Alberta as the duck takes to water; of white-faced people from the great cities of the world, who find a new health and a new out-

look, close to the bosom of the rich, warm earth.

NO "BAD MEN" HERE

It is the romance of the coming of law and order, crowding close on the heels of that first civilization--rounding up the "bad man" before he has a chance to show he is bad--killing the illicit liquor traffic almost before it is born--riding the trails and holding the law before all men, so that all may come and go in safety, knowing that the strong right arm of the law will protect the weak as well as the strong.

It is the romance of a new civilization, expanding itself--adjusting itself to new conditions--bungling and blundering, perhaps, but ever building for a nation yet to be; pushing onward and upward to greater and yet better things.

Alberta as such was not known in Canadian annals, prior to 1882, when the North-West Territory was divided into four provisional districts, for convenience. The four districts were Alberta, Assiniboia, Athabaska and Saskatchewan. Then, in 1905, Alberta and Saskatchewan were created from the territory covered by the four districts first organized. This province took its name from the second daughter of Queen Victoria.

FUR TRADE MADE EARLY HISTORY

Largely, the entire history of Alberta, in its early stages, is the history of the explorer and the fur trader, who followed the great rivers of the unknown hinterland--the Red River, the Assiniboine river, the Saskatchewan,

the Athabaska, the Peace, the Mackenzie. And this early history belongs almost entirely, to central and northern Alberta.

Bouchier de Niverville was the first white man, so far as is known, to penetrate what is now Alberta, as he was sent ahead of the previous explorer, La Verendrye and his sons--who had already established forts on the Red and Assiniboine rivers--and reached the Saskatchewan river in 1751.

But to La Verendrye and his sons, belongs the honor of being the real pioneers and path-finders of the Canadian northwest, for their earlier explorations had already marked the way for those who were to follow them, and their travels had made an open book of the formerly unknown area between the Great Lakes and the land which is now Alberta.

THE INTREPID EXPLORERS

Then came the fur trader--the rivalry between the leaders of New France and the "Gentleman Adventurers"--the search for the North-West Passage--Hendry, Hearne, Mackenzie, Harmon, Back, Franklin--a host of intrepid explorers whose deeds are written large across the pages of Canadian history, and whose exploits still thrill the blood of every school boy who reads of them.

These men sought out the unknown places of the north. They probed the mysteries of the Athabaska, the Peace, the Slave, the Mackenzie rivers; they built posts at strategic points, and pressed onward and ever onward in their restless energy, till all the Great Lone Land was marked down

in maps, and the silent places of the north had felt the white man's tread.

And as the explorers and traders had done for the rivers of the north, so did others, for the Saskatchewan river flowing est. David Thompson, Alexander Henry, Simon Fraser--these men followed the Saskatchewan river, the Finlay and the Peace, until their wandering canoes glided through water flowing westward, and the setting sun showed them the object of their search--the Pacific ocean, an ocean destined later, to bear much of the wealth of the broad prairies to its ultimate markets in Japan, China and Europe.

THE FIRST FORT EDMONTON

Fort Edmonton, which was to give its name to the city which today is the centre of the central and northern Alberta area, was built in 1795 by George Sutherland of the Hudson's Bay company. He named it after the birth-place of his clerk, John Prudens, who was born at Edmonton, near London, England.

In 1798 the rival company, the North-West company, built New Fort Augustus, on the actual site of the present city of Edmonton, and close to Fort Edmonton. At these forts, the Indians were received for the annual trading, when the goods, brought overland by York boats, canoes, dogs and horses, reached their destination in the fall of each year.

The Indians traded furs, and received in return, guns, powder and shot, blankets, traps, axes, flour, tea, finery for the squaws, and an assorted medley of requirements. Buffalo and moose meat, pemmican and dried berries were also traded the pemmican in particular having a wide demand, while the meat was stored in huge ice houses at the various posts.

A BITTER STRUGGLE

From 1811 to 1821 was written the history of the bitter struggle between the rival fur companies, for supremacy. It ended in an agreement to amalgamate the rival interests, and so, from 1821 to 1870, the fur trade went steadily forward, laying the foundations for that in-rush of settlement which followed some years after confederation.

Fort Edmonton, which had been temporarily abandoned during the fight between the companies, was re-established in 1819, to become the metropolis of the Saskatchewan valley, and the strategic centre of central and northern Alberta.

Here, the Hudson's Bay company maintained a large number of horses and dogs for transportation of goods by pack train and dog sleigh, as many as 800 horses being kept at one time for this purpose.

LAND SURRENDER DEED

In 1867 came the British North America act which empowered the admittance of the North-West Territories into confederation, and with the signing of the agreement between the Canadian government and the Hudson's Bay company, the

deed of surrender became effective on July 15, 1870.

With the passing of the North-West Territories act of 1875, and the creation of the province of Alberta as a separate entity, in 1905, the political history of the province rests. Its later story is one of progress along modern political lines, with the part that it plays, in the development of this great new country.

Immigrants commenced to come west almost immediately after the transfer of the Hudson's Bay company's rights to the dominion, and the first regulations respecting the disposal of dominion lands were promulgated in 1871, under which surveyed crown lands were sold at a dollar an acre, with a limit of 640 acres to each purchaser.

HOW LANDS WERE DISPOSED OF

The first Dominion Lands act was passed in 1872, and a great scheme of surveys, embracing the entire north-west territories, was established. Arrangements were then made to dispose of lands in the following various ways:

Halfbreed scrip.
Hudson's Bay reservations.
School lands reserved for education.
Military bounty lands.
Homesteads and pre-emptions to actual settlers.
Grants to railway companies.
Sales to colonization companies.
Sale or lease of grazing and hay lands.
Sale or lease of mining lands.
Grants to original white settlers.
Indian reservations.

Soldier settlement grants.

Some little explanation of these various methods of disposing of crown lands is necessary in order that the intending settler may secure a grasp of the land situation in central and northern Alberta.

HALFBREED SCRIP

Halfbreed scrip was issued in Alberta, to the extent of 61,020 acres of land, to halfbreeds resident in the province, and to their children born before 1885.

Hudson's Bay company lands, under the deed of surrender, comprised one-twentieth of the surveyed lands of the territories south of the North Saskatchewan river, together with parcels of land round their various trading posts.

Out of a total of 6,556,000 acres of land surveyed, 2,175,700 acres are in Alberta. In every fifth row of townships, the whole of sections 8 and 26, and in all other townships, the whole of section 8 and three-quarters of section 26, are Hudson's Bay company's land. (See accompanying plan of a surveyed township.)

SCHOOL LANDS

School lands are provided, these being sections 11 and 29 in each township. They are held in trust by the dominion government, and proceeds from sales of land are invested in Canadian securities, and the income thereon paid annually to the province. Over a million acres of school lands in Alberta have been sold, valued at about $14,000,000. The rate of interest paid to the province was raised in 1918,

from 5 per cent to 6 per cent.

Military bounty lands, to the extent of 160 acres each, were granted to officers and men engaged in the suppression of the halfbreed and Indian rising in 1885. Homestead rights on 320 acres of land were also granted these participants.

THE HOMESTEADER COMES

Homestead and pre-emption lands, of course, brought to central and northern Alberta, its greatest quota of settlers. Under these regulations, every male person over 18 years of age who is a British subject or declares his intention to become such, is entitled to take up 160 acres of homestead land, on payment of a fee of $10. A widow with minor children may also homestead land.

From 1871, when the homestead regulations were first brought into effect, the lure of free land brought thousands of settlers from all over the world, to the fertile plains of western Canada. Central and northern Alberta, of course, received their quota, and the face of the whole district became dotted over with the log shacks and the first humble farm buildings, of these true pioneers of the land of opportunity.

The policy of indiscriminate settlement has been criticised, and perhaps rightly so, on the grounds that it scattered population to an extent that created a huge drain on a new country, in its efforts to serve these settlers with roads, railways, schools, telephones, and similar services.

EARLY SETTLEMENT SCATTERED

Critics have urged that had homestead settlement been conducted systematically, by placing settlers on all the good land in solid blocks, much of the early difficulty in connection with the bringing of modern facilities to the homesteaders, might have been avoided, and railway and road construction would then have grown as the circle of settlement widened.

However, the homesteader came in his wagon, piled high with effects, his wife and children seated on the seat beside him, and his cow tied to the rear of the wagon. He followed the brown trails of the buffalo and the Indian, seeking for a piece of land that took his fancy, and caring little for the miles he paced off behind him, so long as he stopped at last, in some promising section where he decided to make his future home.

Then, setting up his temporary dwelling of canvas, he returned to the nearest land office, filed his application, and forthwith became a resident of the province, with the future all his own, to make or to mar.

BEST HOMESTEAD LAND GONE

The earlier settlers, of course, got the pick of the land, and in a few years, all the best homestead land within reasonable reach of railways or of potential railways, had been taken up. But still the tide of immigration flowed westward across the rolling plains, and further and yet further swept the circl of the pioneer, until homesteads dotted the country everywhere, some of them forty,

fifty and sixty miles from any railraod.

But though central and northern Alberta suffered a heavy financial burden in its effort to bring railways and roads to the homesteader, the days of the heaviest burden are passed, and now, the tide of settlement has surged over and round these earlier homesteaders, so that the lonely settler of a few years ago, now has neighbors on all sides, with school and church, a good road, the telephone, and perhaps the railway, all within easy reach.

TODAY'S LOW-PRICED LAND

The day of the free homestead in central and northern Alberta, which dawned in 1871, is fast approaching its sunset. One might almost say that yesterday was the day of the small farmer who brings in a little money, and so is able to purchase, on easy terms, splendid farm lands at prices lower, possibly, than any other in the world.

Unimproved lands can still be bought for an average price of $15 an acre, in central and northern Alberta. Lands having a much lower production value, cost in the mid-western states of the United States, four or five times as much to purchase.

While there are still homestead lands available, the short cut to financial independence in central and northern Alberta today, is to buy good land, either raw land or partially improved, on the low prices and extended repayment terms offered, which are within reasonable reach of railways, are on good market roads, are served with telephone, schools, churches, and have congenial

neighbors round them who will prevent the newcomer from feeling isolated and lonely in his new home.

RAILWAY LANDS

Railway land grants were set apart in 1879, to the extent of 100,000,000 acres throughout the northwest territories, for the support of railway construction in western Canada. The odd numbered sections in all surveyed townships were reserved for railways, and were placed on sale at set prices.

Grants to colonization companies, under which provision was made for the sale of large tracts of land at nominal prices, were given in return for undertakings to place a definite number of settlers on such lands within a certain period of time, but this method of settlement was never popular with the people of western Canada, and it was later abandoned.

Leasehold privileges are given on grazing lands unsuited to agriculture, on hay and marsh lands, on mineral lands, etc. Title to mineral rights, except on lands sold as mineral lands, does not go with the land.

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT

The return and discharge of thousands of Canadian soldiers at the conclusion of the world war, led to a new scheme for settling dominion lands, and by the Soldier Settlement act of 1917, 453,339 acres of dominion land in Alberta have been settled on by 1,675 soldiers, and 691,959 acres of private land have been purchased for 3,542 soldiers.

This great land settlement scheme, coming as it did right in the middle of the poast-war deflation period, had both its successes and its failures. Many returned soldiers, who had no previous farming experience, are today happy and successful owners of splendid little farms which will one day make them financially independent.

Some of the settlers, of course, failed to succeed on their farms, for in so large a scheme, there must preforce have been a proportion of men foredoomed to failure. But as the years passed, the misfits gradually dropped out, leaving only those who, having survived those first difficult years, are now well on the road to success.

GROUP SETTLEMENT

The last movement of all, in the settlement of the farm lands of central and northern Alberta, is that of group settlement, under the various plans of the empire settlement scheme, railway settlement plans with central European stock, Hebridean settlers under the Scottish immigration plan, and others of like nature.

Large tracts of land have been set aside for these various projects, and today, the tide of immigration into the "Last Best West" is sweeping onward with redoubled vigor, as the eager peoples from all the couhtries of the world, press forward to enter into their new heritage in the land of opportunity.

Post-war depression is a thing of the past. Never was the demand for farm produce better, in central and northern Alberta, than it is today. Successive good crops, with

the promise of a still greater crop for 1926, have placed the stamp of prosperity from one end of the country to the other. Branch railways are being projected and built into country already well-settled and prosperous.

NEW MARKETS ARE OPENING

New markets are crying for the produce of Alberta farms. The western route to the Pacific is cutting down the cost of transportation of Alberta wheat and other products, to the markets of the old world; it is opening the door of the Orient to the possibilities presented by the countless millions of China and Japan, only now waking to a realization that Alberta wheat and Alberta beef are foodstuffs of which it cannot secure enough.

And manufacturing, twin brother to farming, must shortly come into its own in central and northern Alberta. Already, millions of dollars of capital are invested in the district, by manufacturers, who have only touched the fringe of industrial possibility. Alberta demands, in ever-growing quantity, food and clothing, manufactured goods, machinery, automobiles,--all the thousand and one things that a civilized country needs.

Much of this need is supplied by home factories, but the day is not far distant when central and northern Alberta will be self-supporting--when the dollar of the farmer will go to the industrial worker of Alberta, and will return to him again, in an ever-growing demand for wheat and beff, dairy products, and all that his farm can produce.

THE WHEEL OF PROSPERITY

Thus will the wheel of prosperity circle--its hub the ever-growing city of Edmonton, logical centre of this vast and prosperous terrain; its spokes the thousand little towns and villages--the millions of farm homes, throughout central and northern Alberta; its rim, a hundred thousand square mile sweep of as fair a land as ever the eyes of man looked upon.

A hundred years ago, the day of the explorer, the fur trader and the "coureur de bois", the red man and the buffalo.

Fifty years ago, the day of the early settler.

Yesterday, the day of the homesteader.

Today, the day of the cheapest and best farming land in the whole world.

Tomorrow?

Well, come to Alberta and help make that "tomorrow" yours!